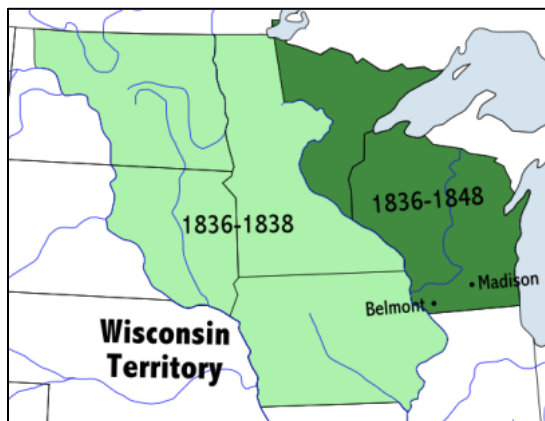


Pieces of Iowa's Past, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides weekly during the Legislative Session, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All italicized text/block quotes in this document are taken directly from historical publications with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

Jeremiah Smith Built Iowa's First Capitol



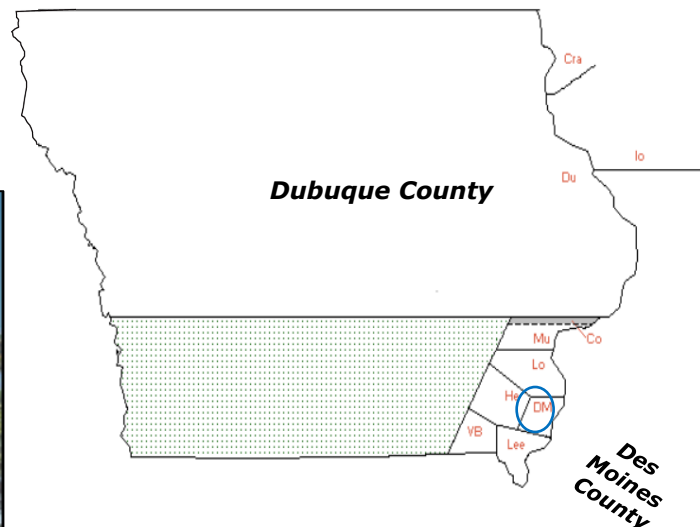
Jeremiah Smith Jr. (also known as Major Smith) built the first Capitol in the Iowa District of [Wisconsin Territory](#).

Smith was born in Ohio in March 1802 and moved with his family to Illinois. He served in the Mounted Rifle Brigade in 1832 during the [Black Hawk War](#). Smith arrived in Burlington in 1833 before Iowa

became a territory in 1838. He had a farm about a mile and a half outside of town and owned property in town on Water Street along the Mississippi River, where he built a warehouse and a store.



Belmont Capitol (right) and the boarding house for legislators (left)



**Counties within the
Wisconsin Territory, 1836,
before the Iowa Territory was
established**

Smith was a Representative from Des Moines County (Iowa side of the Mississippi) and Peter Hill Engle was a Representative from Dubuque County at the Wisconsin Territorial Legislature in Belmont, Wisconsin.

Smith convinced the Wisconsin Territorial Legislature to move the temporary



Home of Major Jeremiah Smith Jr., built in 1833

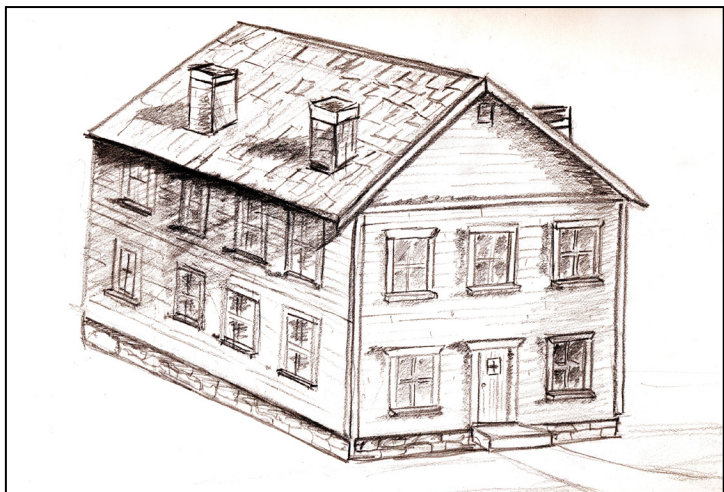
seat of government to Burlington on the Iowa side of the river by promising to build a "Capitol" using his personal funds.

The Wisconsin Territorial Legislature passed an Act locating the seat of government at Burlington until March 4, 1839, unless

buildings were to be completed sooner at Madison.

In the summer of 1837, Smith erected a two-story frame building that measured 40 feet by 70 feet. The Wisconsin Territorial Legislature convened in Smith's Capitol in Burlington on November 6, 1837. The Council occupied the second story and the House of Representatives occupied the lower story. Each of the legislative chambers had a lobby separated from the chamber by a "proper" railing. It was heated with hearths and a stove in the lobby. The Burlington newspaper described the building as "handsomely built" and a great improvement, as a desk was furnished for each member rather than a single table that was provided in Belmont.

On December 12, 1837, Smith's Capitol burned down along with seven other structures, including his other property on Water Street. Smith spent several years trying to recoup his losses



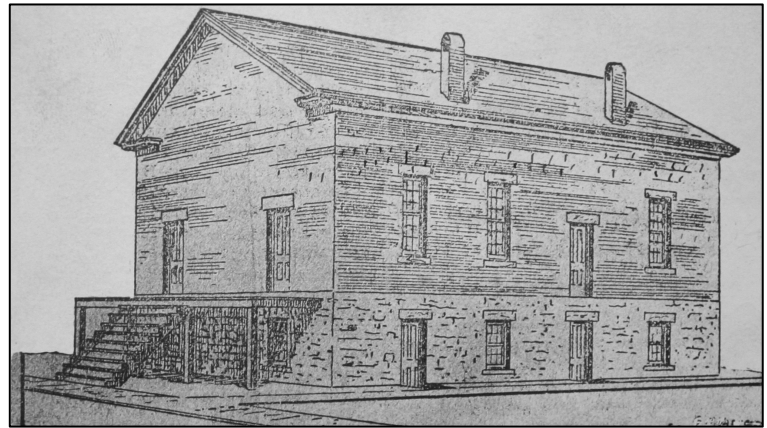
This is an artist's rendering of Jeremiah Smith's two-story frame Capitol. —by Zack Bunker

from the U.S. Government. He claimed that the government owed him for the cost of the Capitol. Unfortunately, Smith was not successful in convincing officials in Washington that he should be reimbursed for a building he owned and had neglected to insure.

The Wisconsin Territorial Legislature continued its session in Burlington, with the Council and House of Representatives using temporary quarters in two separate structures. On July 4, 1838, Iowa became a Territory and the Iowa Territorial Legislature convened in Burlington and leased space in the Zion Methodist Church for \$1,200.

Smith did not serve in the Iowa Territorial Legislature or in the Iowa State Legislature after Iowa became a state on December 28, 1846.


Smith remained in Iowa. Sources state he concentrated on farming until his death.



Sketch of the Zion Methodist Church (Burlington, Iowa), where the Legislature of the Iowa Territory began meeting in 1838.

BURLINGTON HAWK-EYE.

March 29, 1849

**FRUIT TREES FOR SALE.**

WE have on hand and for sale a great quantity of Fruit Trees, one and a half miles west of Burlington, at the residence of Jeremiah Smith, Jr. Our varieties consist of about fifty kinds of Fruit, of the best selections that could be procured in the west and is said to be well adapted to this climate, our assortment of Fruit comprises Apples, Peaches, Cherries and Grape vines, Currents, etc., which was selected by an experienced person in the culture of Fruit, near the city of Cincinnati, Ohio, and will be sold at reduced prices, and warranted to be the identical Fruit that we represent it to be. A great portion of these Trees will bloom this Spring, if removed at a proper time with care. Those wishing to plant Orchards this Spring will do well by giving us a call before purchasing elsewhere.

March 8, 1849-6t • SMITH & LUCKY.



**Aspen Grove Cemetery
Burlington, Iowa**

Two Named Jeremiah Smith

There is a [second Jeremiah Smith](#) found in Iowa's history. The second Jeremiah Smith was known also as Jeremiah Smith Sr., or possibly Colonel Smith.

To tell the story of Jeremiah Smith Jr., one must include a little about Jeremiah Smith Sr. Often times the two were confused; even the federal government paid Jeremiah Smith Sr. \$4,000 that was owed to Jeremiah Smith Jr. Although the mistake was finally remedied, the case against Smith Sr. was dismissed and the U.S. Treasury never recovered the money that had been mistakenly paid to Smith Sr.

The Daily Gazette

Saturday, April 10, 1886

Next house south, where the south end of the elevator is, was the store of Major Jeremiah Smith. He brought the first stock of goods to this town and sold a good many goods to the Indians. He had a large stock for the town. His clerks were Oliver Cottle, now residing in California, and Smith Bowen, the oldest brother of Senator Tom Bowen of Colorado. Smith soon after went to Texas and then to Mexico, where he died. Major Smith was a very prominent citizen. He was a member of the council from Des Moines county. He owned a large tract of land, or had a claim on it, west of town, and Smith's addition, named after him, is part of it. He built the state house in 1837 for the Wisconsin legislature, on a vacant lot south of his store, which was destroyed by fire on the night of Dec. 12th, 1837, while the legislature was occupying it. The next house south of Major Smith's store was a small one; old man Jones had a saloon in it, and the only saloon

Note: Smith Jr. did not travel to Texas and then die in Mexico. This may have been Smith Sr.